

## INTRODUCTION

Large-scale learning assessments can be used to generate performance and contextual data on student learning outcomes. They can be national, regional, or international; school based or household based. The UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO) has conducted a qualitative study to explore both how and why learning assessment data are used in six sub-Saharan African countries.

This Information Sheet provides background details for IIEP's Policy Brief on Zambia. It looks at the characteristics and setting of student assessments, presents the roles and responsibilities of the different actors, and sets out the documented uses of learning data.



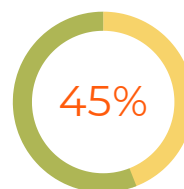
## KEY FIGURES (UIS, 2018)

17 352 000

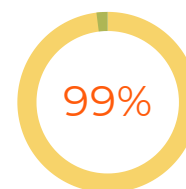
POPULATION

5 612 494

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN  
(PRIMARY & SECONDARY)



AGED 14 YEARS  
AND YOUNGER



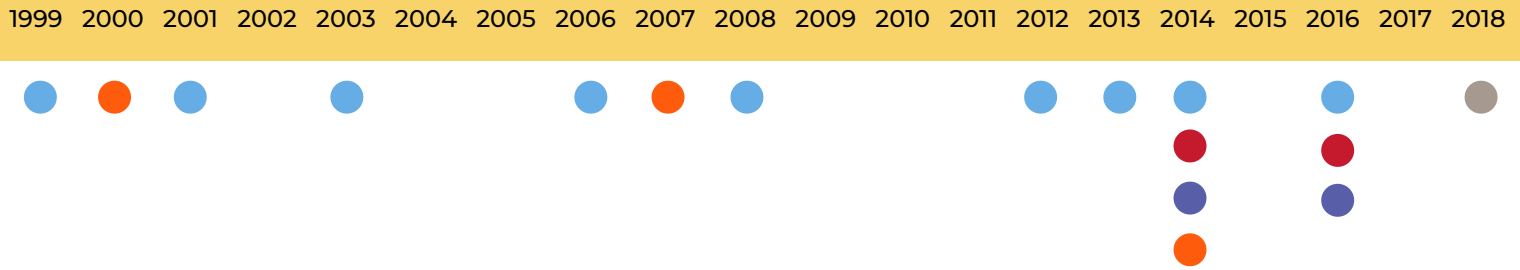
PRIMARY GROSS  
ENROLMENT

## BACKGROUND

Zambia conducts five large-scale assessments: the **National Assessment Survey (NAS)**, the **Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA)**, the **Early Grade Mathematics Assessment (EGMA)**, the **Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality Survey (SEACMEQ)**, and the **Programme for International Student Assessment for Development (PISA-D)**.

The NAS is mainly funded by Zambia's Ministry of General Education (MoGE); the EGRA and EGMA by DFID and GPE; the SEACMEQ by the MoGE, SEACMEQ HQ, and the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and PISA-D by the World Bank Group.

# ASSESSMENT FREQUENCY



## ACTORS, ROLES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Centralized level

Department of Planning and Information (DPI)

- Coordinates the SEACMEQ in Zambia
- Monitors and evaluates the implementation of education programmes
- Allocates funding to learning assessment programmes according to the ministerial budget

Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ; part of the DSC)

- Develops and conducts examinations and large-scale assessments at the national level
- Leads the design, implementation, data analysis, and dissemination of NAS and the implementation of the EGRA, the EGMA, and PISA-D
- Monitors PRCs and DRCs

Department of Standards and Curriculum (DSC)

- Revises the curriculum and ensures education quality
- Uses an inspection tool for collecting school, teacher, and learner data
- Leads development of data collection instruments for the NAS, with ECZ

Central Statistics Office

- In charge of statistics across all areas
- Responsible for the sampling of large-scale learning assessments

National Assessment Technical Committee (NATC)

- Composed of ECZ and DSC staff
- Reviews NAS data collection procedures and tools and monitors data collection process
- Handles technical NAS execution

Decentralized level

Provincial resource centres (PRCs) and district resource centres (DRCs)

- Lead local NAS implementation

# ASSESSMENT DETAILS

TEST  
POPULATION

SUBJECTS  
ASSESSED

TEST  
FRAMEWORK

BACKGROUND  
QUESTIONNAIRES

**NAS**

Grades 5 & 9

Grade 5: English and national languages; Life skills; Maths  
Grade 9: Maths; English; Environmental sciences

Curriculum based

**Learners:** background and learning conditions  
**Teachers:** qualifications and characteristics  
**Principals:** management and infrastructure  
*Not administered in every assessment cycle*

**EGRA**

Grade 2

Local languages (letter sound identification, oral reading fluency, reading comprehension, invented [non-word] reading); English (letter name identification, listening comprehension, vocabulary)

Competency based

**Learners:** background and interactions with teachers  
**Teachers:** characteristics, practices, pedagogical oversight  
**Principals:** leadership, teacher characteristics and attendance, infrastructure, school closings  
**School inventories**

**EGMA**

Grade 2

Procedural knowledge (number identification, addition and subtraction); conceptual knowledge (number comparison, patterns, word problems)

Competency based

**Learners:** background and interactions with teachers  
**Teachers:** characteristics, practices, pedagogical oversight  
**Principals:** leadership, teacher characteristics and attendance, infrastructure, school closings  
**School inventories**

**SEAC  
MEQ**

Grade 6

Reading; Maths; Health knowledge (HIV/AIDS: teachers also assessed on this)

Competency based

**Learners:** characteristics, home and learning environments  
**Teachers:** characteristics, classroom resources, professional support  
**Principals:** characteristics, infrastructure, school operation and problems

**PISA-  
D**

15-year-olds in Grade 7 or higher

Reading; Maths; Science

Competency based

**Learners:** home background, approaches to learning, family/community support, in-class learning time, inclusivity  
**Teachers:** parental involvement with schools, family/community support, inclusivity  
**Principals:** learning time, absenteeism, inclusivity  
**School resources, buildings, and equipment**

# PROGRAMMES AND TOOLS INFORMED BY LEARNING ASSESSEMENTS

## ▶ Catch Up

A response to low EGRA and EGMA test scores, aiming to enable teachers to target struggling pupils and support them with specific tasks using the 'targeted learning' approach. Implemented by VVOB and financed by USAID, the programme reached 1640 schools.

## ▶ Let's Read

Launched by the MoGE in cooperation with USAID to strengthen early-grade literacy, it focused on making local stakeholders (e.g. education officials, parents, communities, the private sector) aware of literacy resources and school accountability.

## ▶ Directorate of Early Childhood Education (ECE)

The results of NAS highlighted the benefits of ECE and encouraged the creation of the directorate. Assessment results showed that pupils who were enrolled in ECE performed better than those who have never attended ECE.

# POLICY DOCUMENTS



The National Learning Assessment Framework (NLAF, 2017) is an overarching document that defines principles applying to all student assessments in Zambia, showing how the assessments articulate with one another. It presents the intended use of learning assessment data in general as well as for specific actor groups, and outlines the roles and responsibilities of actors in managing and using learning data. It also sets out the conditions necessary for the effective use of learning data.

## ▶ Teacher training programmes

The EGMA and EGRA were used to adopt more effective pedagogical approaches in early grades. The NAS and SEACMEQ highlighted the need to train teachers in STEM subjects. Finally, Zambia's 'Fast Track' policy for upgrading teachers' skills was informed by assessment findings on teacher qualifications.

## ▶ Curriculum revisions

Learning assessment data were used to inform curriculum revisions for STEM schools.

# CONTACT



Prepared by Mathieu Bodin under the supervision and guidance of Hugues Moussy, Head of R&D at IIEP-UNESCO, and Ieva Raudonytė, Associate Research Officer at IIEP-UNESCO.

For further information, please contact [i.raudonyte@iiep.unesco.org](mailto:i.raudonyte@iiep.unesco.org)

This publication is available in Open Access under the AttributionShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) licence. By using the content of this publication, you accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository.

© IIEP-UNESCO 2021

@IIEP\_UNESCO

 /IIEPUNESCO

 /IIEPUNESCO

 /IIEPUNESCO

